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JANUARY 2021

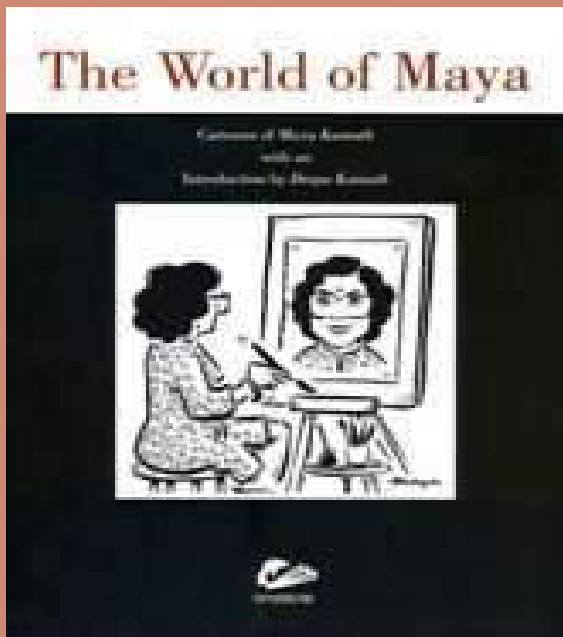


# SPARROW newsletter



SOUND & PICTURE ARCHIVES FOR RESEARCH ON WOMEN

# The World of Maya



Maya Kamath was a trained painter who later took to drawing cartoons. Her cartoons were not only witty but also extremely thought provoking and gender-sensitive. She worked on her cartoons almost until her last moments. She made sure that her last cartoon for *Asian Age* was ready before she died. This book contains some 1000 of cartoons and also some illustrations and drawings of Maya Kamath with a long introduction by Deepa Kamath, her daughter. Her cartoons cover a wide range of themes from family to international politics.

Contribution Price: (India): Rs. 750/  
Contribution Price: (Abroad): \$40

This book is also available in [BookGanga.com](http://BookGanga.com).

On 17th January 2005 SPARROW held an exhibition of Maya Kamath's cartoons in collaboration with Cymroza Art Gallery. Along with the exhibition SPARROW also released *The World of Maya*, a book of her cartoons with an introduction by her daughter Deepa Kamath. Amarnath Kamath, her husband, received the first copy of the book. Jaya Bachchan, the renowned actor and Member, Rajya Sabha, inaugurated the exhibition.

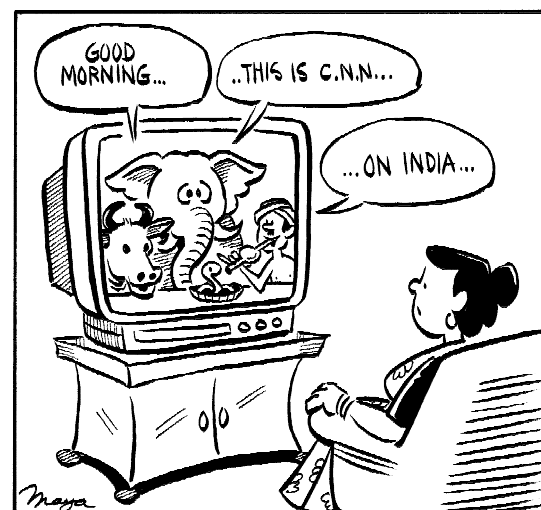
On 15th February 2005 SPARROW held a similar exhibition in collaboration with India International Centre at The Art Gallery, IIC Annexe. The exhibition was inaugurated by Brinda Karat, General Secretary, AIDWA, who also released the book *The World OF MAYA*. Writer and cartoonist, Manjula Padmanabhan, received the first copy.

On 16th April 2005 SPARROW held a similar exhibition at The Art Gallery of Alliance Française de Bangalore. The exhibition was inaugurated by Girish Karnad, the well-known writer and film-maker who also released the book *The World of Maya*. The Television Journalist Nupur Basu received the first copy of the book. la Padmanabhan, received the first copy.



**Deccan Herald**  
**10.3.92**

Star TV is the cause of your insomnia, madam. The only cure is to go back to watching Doordarshan.



**Deccan Herald**  
**5.7.95**



|                                      |       |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Photographs.....                     | 19267 |
| Ads.....                             | 7449  |
| Books in 12 languages.....           | 5728  |
| Newspaper Articles in 8 languages... | 31018 |
| Journal Articles in 8 languages..... | 5090  |
| Brochures in 9 languages.....        | 2062  |
| Print Visuals.....                   | 4552  |
| Posters.....                         | 1772  |
| Calendars.....                       | 129   |
| Cartoons.....                        | 3629  |
| Maya Kamath's cartoons.....          | 8000  |
| Oral History.....                    | 659   |
| Video Films.....                     | 1262  |
| Audio CDs and Cassettes.....         | 929   |
| Private Papers.....                  | 280   |

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**SPARROW**

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

**W**e planned to bring out this SNL much earlier. But the pandemic lockdown and subsequent closure of the SPARROW office and the time taken to mentally and physically prepare ourselves to get back to the normal pace of work once the office opened, delayed many projects including the SNL 40. We promise that the next one will follow very soon.

We thought that this issue must carry the story of a woman who has fought against cancer and also the story of a woman who has brought the Gerald Durrell kind of laughter into our lives. So we have two book reviews of the books written by B V Bharathi and Usha Rajagopalan. There are many women who have been active participants in the freedom movement whom we have forgotten not only because their activities have not been recorded properly but also because only the names of some women have remained prominent in the history of the freedom movement and the history of the nation. One such forgotten woman is Khorshed Naoroji, granddaughter of the renowned Dadabhai Naoroji, who gave up everything that was in her life to join the Sabarmati Ashram to devote her life to the cause of the nation. Thanks to a lecture organised by Mani Bhavan we came to know about her and Roshan G Shahani has captured her life brilliantly for this issue of SNL.

We also have poetry pages with poems of B V Bharathi and Malsawmi Jacob.

We have covered two SPARROW Literary Award events and we hope you will enjoy reading about the writers who have received the awards. We have also written about the women Padma awardees who have done us proud.

We look forward to your feedback and do visit our website [www.sparrowonline.org](http://www.sparrowonline.org) to know about our work and to donate towards our archival activities.

Normally our homage section celebrates the lives of many women and condoles the death of women who have died before their time. But this time we had nearly 60 women to whom we had to pay tributes. So we decided to make the entire homage section into a supplementary issue. There are women in this section who have lived the kind of lives that need to be written about and others whom Covid caught unawares. Depression has led to some suicides and some have faced violent and lonely deaths. By writing these homages we hope we have paid our respects to all of them.

*Happy Reading!*





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SPARROW congratulates  
Dr Rohini Godbole & Sangkhumi

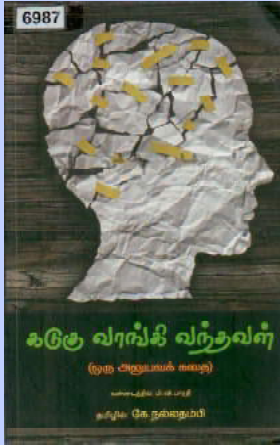
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## EVENT 24-27

Padma Awards 2020

COVER PAGE: Drawing by painter Rupa Chordia  
ALL ILLUSTRATIONS: SPARROW COLLECTIONS  
(Two drawings done by Bharati Kapadia for SPARROW  
volumes on writers are used in the poetry pages)  
EDITOR: Dr C S Lakshmi  
CONSULTING EDITOR: Dr Charanjeet Kaur  
DESIGN AND LAYOUT: Pooja Pandey



Title: *Kadugu Vaangi Vanthaval*  
(The One Who Brought Mustard Seeds)  
Author: B V Bharathi  
Translated from the Kannada  
*Sasuve Thandhavalu* by K Nallathambi  
Publisher: New Century Book House, Chennai  
Year of Publication: 2015  
Number of pages: 134  
Price: Rs.100

## A STORY TO TELL

—C S Lakshmi

This book is the story of an experience; the experience of surviving cancer. The interesting title of the book is taken from a Buddhist tale with a little variation. It refers to the story of Kisa Gotami who came to Buddha after losing her only child and asked him to bring the child back to life. The Buddha told her that if she could bring white mustard seeds from a family where no death had occurred he would bring the child back to life. She went from house to house only to realise that there was no family which had not faced the death of a family member. It is a story about dealing with mortality. B V Bharathi calls herself the woman who could bring the mustard seeds to tell the world that one can survive cancer. It is a message poetically told with a very imaginative title.

B V Bharathi was a working woman with a husband she enjoyed being with and a son who was an engineering student. Her parents were loving and she wrote occasionally and she had nothing much to complain about. But she was a hypochondriac with a fertile imagination. From sore throat to stomach upset everything scared her and without any prescription she used to go for all kinds of tests and would pester her husband asking him “Will I die?” At one point even her very patient and loving husband gets so irritated that he says it would be better if she died rather than nagging him this way. Two years after she got over this obsession with her bodily ailments, when cancer really struck her she did not recognise it. The first doctor she goes to is a busy man who just throws his diagnosis at her without even worrying about what it would do to a patient. Later she goes to the Sri Shankara Cancer Hospital and Research Centre and is treated by a kind and understanding doctor. It took her one and a half years to be finally cured. She went through the surgery, chemotherapy and radiation often in pain and depression but her family, some friends and her own never

dying spirit saw her through the ordeal.

In the book she writes about it without inhibitions and with a great sense of humour. There is that occasion when after surgery with the drain pipe to drain fluids still on, she asks her son to get an auto and goes to meet a friend just to prove to herself that she can do it. The auto drivers who take her and bring her back are shocked and concerned but she is confident that she would make it. She says there are many kinds of friends. There are those who listen to you and reassure you. And there are others who tell you horror stories of people they know who died of cancer. There are others who weep and dramatise their sympathy for you. There are also those who are willing to talk with you for any length of time over the phone but say they have no time to personally come and visit you. But she says good and sensible friends and Facebook friends made it possible for her to face the one year of treatment.

That is the year they also build the house they planned despite various restrictions on her going out and eating out for fear of infection. But with a kind doctor who tells her to imagine one year of her life was never there and with friends and family who are game for all her adventures she manages to live through that year and also laugh through it. When she loses all her hair due to chemotherapy she casually remarks that it saved her the expenses of going to the beauty parlour. Also, she begins to wear a burqa as a cover to go out. She remarks that once when she asked someone the direction giving a name, that person took one look at her burqa and said he was not that person and ran for his life! And another time she visits four public toilets in one building to find a clean one. After she leaves the last one she sees the caretaker of the toilet going behind each door of all the toilets to check if she had planted something there! She remarks that she realised then what it is to be dressed obviously as a



person from the Muslim community.

She also recounts the hilarious experience of finding a cook. One cook says that she would come early morning at 5 a.m. and cook for the whole day; another one says that she can only travel up to a particular bus stop and if they really want to employ her they have to do something about it which really meant they had to shift to a place three stops ahead to employ her! Finally they find a person who agrees to cook all that they need and Bharathi's mother gives her a list of things she will have to do. Bharathi writes that there is a saying in Kannada which asks where is Mysore in the sweet Maysorepak; similarly there was no such thing as cooking in this pleasant natured cook. Bharathi herself was not a great cook but her family becomes appreciative of her cooking after this cook experiments with food to turn them utterly tasteless. Later they find out that she had never cooked in her life and that her husband used to run a restaurant and all the food used to be brought from there to the house.

Finally Bharathi comes out of it all laughing and wiser about life and about cancer. K Nallathambi's translation stays close to the Kannada original and is able to bring out all that Bharathi intended in the original into the translation. It is a book one must read not just to get over the fear and all the wrong notions about cancer but also to understand how precious life is and how to keep it that way. That is why it also makes reviewing a book published in 2015 worthwhile.



## Congratulations!



**SPARROW Congratulates Folk Artiste Gulabbai Sangamnerka** for receiving Tamasha Samrajni Vithabai Narayangaokar(2018-19) Award

**SPARROW congratulates veteran theatre on-screen character artiste Madhuvanti Dandekar** for receiving The Sangeetacharya Annasaheb Kirloskar Musical Theatre Lifetime Achievement Award

## Happy to share



### SPARROW CONGRATULATES ALL THE AWARDEES

Gan Samragini Lata Mangeshkar Award 2020-21-  
Usha Mangeshkar

All India Football Federations Women's Footballer  
of the Year 2019-20 Award-Sanju Yadav  
(Midfielder)

National Award to Teachers 2020-Sudha Painuli

Overall Winner of the 2020 Commonwealth Short  
Story Prize-Kritika Pandey

Fed Cup Heart Award for Aisa/Oceania Zone- Sania  
Mirza

UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year 2019-  
Suman Gawani

Chameli Devi Jain Award- Arfa Sherwani & Rohini  
Mohan

Hemingway Award 2020- Novelist Ruchika Tomar

IFTC Tourism Impact Award 2020- Zoya Akhtar

2019 FIH Women's Rising Star of the Year-  
Lalremsiami

SERB Women Excellence Award-2020- Dr Niti Kumar

French honour for Theatre Artiste- Sanjana Kapoor

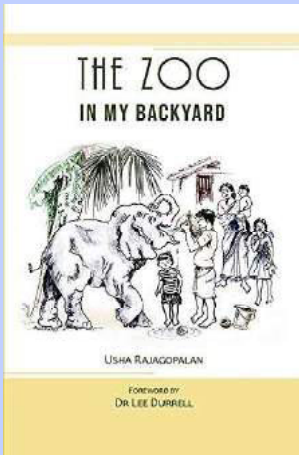
'World Games Athlete of the Year' Award- Rani  
Rampal

Miss Teen International 2019- Aayushi Dholakia

Global Child Prodigy Award 2020- Indian  
girl Sucheta Satish

Costa Children's Award 2019- Jasbinder Bilan

Cisco Youth Leadership Award 2019- Priya Prakash



Title: The Zoo in My Backyard  
Author: Usha Rajagopalan  
Publisher: Manipal Universal Press, Manipal  
Year: 2020  
Number of Pages: 184  
Price: 290

## LOVING ANIMALS, LOVING HUMANS

—C S Lakshmi

It is not often that you find a book that excites and thrills you right from the first page. Having spent many hours reading, enjoying and laughing with Gerald Durrel and loving his animal adventures it was a pleasant surprise to discover a Durrel of our own with animal stories that would keep you hooked on to the book. I knew Usha Rajagopalan as a conservationist who brought alive a lake that had almost died in south Bengaluru called the Puttenahalli Lake. The lake is now home for many life forms including migratory birds. I also knew Usha Rajagopalan as a writer of fiction. But discovering her as an Indian Gerald Durrel doing her own style of “nature writing” as Lee Durrel calls it in the foreword, was a great delight.

Usha’s father whom they call Anna, was a forest officer and a wild life conservationist and while other fathers brought clothes and toys Usha’s father went deep into the forest and brought them young ones of animals that had been abandoned or injured or whose mother had died. It could be a dog or a parakeet but it could also be a mouse deer, a giant deer, a black monkey or a pair of rabbits. It was not unusual for him to bring home a baby elephant or a bear either! Some of them stayed at home in the backyard of a big joint family with grandparents, a fun uncle and no-nonsense aunt and five children and their parents. But the others, once they had been nursed back to good health, were given away to the Thiruvananthapuram zoo.

Kuttan, the baby elephant, who seemed to have a bottomless pit for a stomach and the snarling and growling Teddy, the black bear, of course, went to the zoo but there were others who stayed much to the delight of the children and the agony of Manni, Usha’s mother, who had to feed and take care of five children and their innumerable strange pets too. But the children had a father who was a conspirator along with them and they always waited for him to come

back from his forest trips and pull out something small from inside his shirt or open a box with holes with an animal inside. The family menagerie grew with the arrival of Kesavan the black monkey who enjoyed pulling out the fuse and plunging parts of the house in darkness and Devil, the Rajapalayam hound (brought in lieu of a wolf that Usha’s brother Kumar had pestered his father for) who took off every time he was untied, with Kumar at the other end of the leash literally being dragged by Devil. Then there was the parakeet that fell off a tree which Usha found and so became her responsibility. She had to be given a name. But was it a girl or a boy? ‘Psittacula kramerie’ was its family name. That was a mouthful. So Usha decided to call it Psitta with the P silent. If it turned out to be a girl she would call her ‘Sita’; if it was a boy, it would of course, be ‘Pitta’.

And just when one gets used to Psitta growing wings and Kesavan being tied with a metal chain there come the family of rabbits which begins with just two rabbits: Rani and Raja. Anna builds a huge roomy cage for them and the children wonder if he was going to get more rabbits. But soon they find out why. Rani gives birth to six babies. Usha’s elder sister, goes into the cage and comes out to declare that Rani had six babies and that she herself had become an aunt! Then the Pomeranian Maxi (named so because Maxi, Midi and Mini were the dress lengths fashionable then and the two other pups they planned to name Midi and Mini had already been taken and only Maxi was brought home) and Judie, the giant squirrel are added to the family zoo. This time it is “Cheechu”, Usha’s younger brother, who names the giant squirrel ‘Judie’ for it resembles his favourite Judie teacher.

Apart from being an animal lover and wild life conservationist, the children suspect that their father was also a mad scientist because he locked himself up in the garage which was out of bounds for the children and no one knew



what he did there. Finally they find out that he was researching on the gills of fish. They are relieved to know he was not mad although he was a scientist. And then comes Mini, the mouse deer followed by a pair of white fantailed pigeons and feeding them becomes Usha's sister Vijaya's responsibility. And they had young ones too. But then one day they fly off leaving Vijaya in tears. But Anna rewards her with a cage with six budgerigars blue, green and yellow in colour soon to occupy a huge cage with a large family of them. As if this was not enough, Vijaya also gets for herself a peacock and a peahen despite Manni's protests. Vijaya tells Manni that peacocks eat snakes and the house would become snake-proof. But Ammai, the grandmother, finally puts her foot down saying having peacocks at home was inauspicious as they brought death with every call. So the peacocks go to the Subramanya temple nearby.

And the family zoo keeps growing with Tommy who becomes Tommynathan ( because he is in a South Indian household) and Suku, the farting black monkey, who liked to sit on Manni's lap, and there are the usual family dramas: Baluchittappa, the younger uncle, rolling his eyes for good effect, narrating the story of Alfred Hitchcock's film *Birds* and scaring a bunch of kids with birds for pets in the house, snakes appearing to frighten the family, riding a moped, chicken essence in a vial being fed to the kids outside the house so they would gain weight, secretly boiled eggs being fed to the peacocks and the tragedy of stepping over Snow White, the rabbit, and killing it. The paternal aunt had her own role to play too. Kunjathai, the younger aunt, was very strict and did not brook any nonsense. For any little mischief she would seat the guilty child on the top shelf below the staircase and only repeated promises to be good would bring the child down. When she got married and sat blushing next to her husband, Cheechu who thought it was his duty to warn the new entrant to the family, went up to him and whispered in his ears, "Take care. If you are naughty, she'll seat you on the top shelf below the staircase."

So goes this delightful book. Those who love animals would find this book very close to their heart. What is more, even those who don't like animals and know nothing about animals or about keeping animals at home would find it so. Usha's book, like the magician's hat that brings out objects put into it as totally different objects, is capable of converting even animal haters into animal lovers by the time they reach the end of the book. With wonderful illustrations by Teamea Costa, this book will win anyone over. It is no wonder then that Usha Rajagopalan's little granddaughter Meera draws "aools", "krans" and "snak brrdes" and runs to the balcony to return the call of a "koyel" with a loud 'Kuoo....' One would be surprised if she did not.

## EVENT

Before we knew that a crisis like COVID-19 was going to hit us and that there will be a total lockdown SPARROW held a one-day workshop on February 20<sup>th</sup> 2020 in collaboration with the Research Centre for Women's Studies and Dr Putul Sathe. It was a workshop meant for students of Women's Studies and the students of the English Department and also some teachers. It was planned as an audio-visual workshop on the theme Women's Lives, Women's Words: Some Thoughts on Feminism as Experience and Writing Women into History. The one-day workshop began with a lecture by Dr C S Lakshmi on women's contribution to history with a power-point presentation and in the course of the day two films produced by SPARROW, *Ten Women, Ten Lives*, *Ten Concerns* and *Malathamamma* were screened. The first one was on women's scholarship and action and was on the life and work of ten women from different parts of India. The second one was a biographical film on Malathamama, a musical theatre artiste, daughter of the legendary Gubbi Veeranna of Karnataka. The film screenings were followed by interactive sessions and the students enthusiastically participated with some students opening up to talk about their own lives and struggles for education.



Dr C S Lakshmi  
addressing the  
students

Dr C S Lakshmi,  
Putul Sathe with  
SPARROW and  
RCWS Team





Khorshed Naoroji with her brother and Rabindranath Tagore in the 1920s. From the blog post of Artemis Leontis whose article is quoted here, on her biography, *Eva Palmer Sikelianos: A Life in Ruins*.

## CROSSING BORDERS: KHORSHED NAOROJI AND THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT

—ROSHAN G SHAHANI

Twice a year on Gandhi's birth and death anniversaries, we'll observe his statue being cleaned of bird droppings; we'll hear appropriate speeches being made by appropriate personalities; we'll see garlands being placed by current VVIPs; and a few weeks later we will see withered versions. This has become a meaningless routine. Hence, it was a refreshing contrast to listen to two very interesting talks at the Mani Bhavan last October(2019). The first was by well-known economist, historian and columnist, Dr Ramachandra Guha, on the makings of Gandhi's biography, the other by Dr Dinyar Patel, (Department of History, University of South Carolina). The one by Patel set one thinking. While Gandhi remained in the shadows, the focus was on a relatively unknown personality, who was inspired by Gandhi. Khorshed Naoroji, granddaughter of the renowned Dadabhai Naoroji, gave up a brilliant career in western classical music, a beautiful bungalow at Nepean Sea Road, a comfortable, even luxurious existence in Bombay, to join the Sabarmati Ashram, and to devote her life to the freedom struggle. Yet, not many people know about her today, and I for one, hadn't heard of her till I heard Dr Patel's interesting talk.

History often passes us by, with ghost-like figures hidden in its folds. And yet, they were once flesh and blood women and men who had contributed to the making of our histories, but whose names have either been forgotten or whose names we had not even heard of. We need to remind ourselves and to understand that a national movement is made possible by people on the margins of the movement; that leaders could not have led without people willing to accept their leadership, that it will always

be a people's movement that will lead to change.

Hearing about Khurshedben, as she was to be referred to, and subsequently reading the snippets of information on her, one recognises the urgent need to archive every document, every scrap of paper, to help research, revive and recreate histories. (SPARROW in its own humble way has been doing so over more than 30 years and hence the impetus given to writing this piece.) In great measure the impulse has also come from Dinyar Patel's talk and his utmost willingness to share those invaluable 'scraps' of history.

This article, such as it is, might seem a digression and filled with rambling asides, with missing links and fissures, rather than with emphasis on facts, figures and dates, which our grand narratives will constantly demand. Hence, one such aside before I write on Khurshedben might be considered relevant, because it highlights the sad ignorance of zealots living in post-independent India (or rather a neo-colonial India). We have witnessed the patriotic fervour with which British names of streets and places have been renamed. But patriotism and jingoism are near twins; in the case in question, it was sheer ignorance of our nation's history that led the enthusiasts of a certain party to want to change the name of "Madame Cama Road". Another instance, amusing were it not so absurd, was the need to change the name of Laburnum Road where Mani Bhavan stands, though the yellow flowering laburnum trees have long since been cut down.

Returning to Khurshedben, it would be in the fitness of things to begin her narrative by quoting the late Dr Usha Mehta, the well-known Gandhian, and a fellow detenu at Yerwada jail during the 1942 Quit India movement. "You



could see nationalism oozing from her eyes,” was her recall. (1) Undoubtedly, it was the Mahatma who inspired the young woman to cross the boundary that divided her privileged lifestyle from one of austerity. At the same time, other currents and cross currents were at work. Inevitably, her grandfather’s passionate intellect and commitment to India was a major factor. Unfortunately, though we were told that she and her sisters were in close correspondence with their grandfather while he was in England, no records exist to testify this acknowledgement. Her sisters, Geshasp, Perin and Nergish Captain (the Captain sisters as they were called), were a great influence upon her impressionable mind, more so, when she joined the first two in Paris and London. Neither Dadabhai’s only son, nor his sons-in-law (the Captain brothers) were activists, and in fact, Khorshed was a posthumous child. (2)

Actually, at the outset, Khorshed’s better known sisters were inspired by Madame Cama and Veer Savarkar during the years 1905-1910. It was only later that their revolutionary zeal was channelled in the Gandhian direction. An interesting fact is worth mentioning here which may not be connected directly with Khorshed. On a journey undertaken by Perin and Savarkar together from Paris to London, the latter deliberately moved away from Perin, knowing that he was going to be arrested by British intelligence on reaching London. Again, even while the two sisters had eventually distanced themselves from the extremist positions of Savarkar and Madame Cama, Perin was among the few, who, years later, had visited the lonely and ailing Madame Cama at the Parsi General hospital in Bombay. (3)

A very unusual and impressionistic encounter that Khorshed had, was her meeting and subsequent friendship with the American woman and Greek scholar, Eva Palmer Sikelianos, producer of the Delphic festivals during the late 1920s. When Khorshed visited Eva in Greece, she was enthused by Eva’s passion for reviving the Greek past. As it so often happens, it was in a European country that an Indian, hitherto immersed in western classical music, found herself increasingly drawn to create an indigenous Indian culture, weaning it from what was thought then, as western intrusion. We need to leave our homeland in order to return to it, to retrieve it.

So Khorshed returns to Bombay and we read from her letters her troubled, confused state of mind. A piece of irony here; undoubtedly it might be because of my limited access to research articles on the remarkable Khorshed; but the only one which has reproduced personal letters written by this Indian woman, and which conveys the

moments before she takes the plunge, which even reproduces a rare photo of her and her brother with Eva and friends on the iconic steps of Delphi, is not an Indian source, but taken from an Athenian journal. Sad to say, hardly any trace of Khorshed’s unique identity seems to exist in our part of the world. For this reason I refer to and quote from this article at length. (4)

In her own words, we read of Khorshed’s growing concern for her homeland. She writes to her friend Eva, how Greece “had caressed her like a mother”, how she desired to revive Indian music. “I must be very stupid. I cannot play the simplest Hindu melody on the piano nor can I write any sound of my own country.” Writing from her home on Nepean Sea Road, she reflects despondently upon the sights she sees. “More cars have increased, as well as cheap European finery. Somehow European stuffs and colours look so tawdry in the Indian sun ... India is poorer than ever before...” (One wonders if she could have read and was echoing her grandfather’s impassioned writings about his famous “Drain Theory”). In the same troubled vein she continues, “I can’t see clearly. I wish often that I hadn’t been born. I hate to stay in the house I am living and hate to see so much food wasted and go about in a car when millions are starving.” (5)

In a short while however, Khorshed was to “hear the sound of [her] own country” was beginning to “see things clearly”. She was to march to the beat of a distant drum. She was to leave her home, her music and family behind, to participate in the freedom struggle. We may not have Khorshed’s own record of the actual move. But the same interesting article reproduces her sister Nergish Captain’s letter to Eva. “....I hope Khorshed does not only point to the glories and colours of the gorgeous east of song and story, but gives you some idea of the tragic fall of her people, the cause of the shackles they wear now. However, in the middle of gloom we have the glory of possessing a Gandhi and that gives one hope and courage to struggle on. Perhaps in other births and other years neither country nor race had divided us.” (6)

Apart from her moving, eloquent style, one that sensitises us to the thoughts of yet one more of Dadabhai’s granddaughters, it seems to anticipate the entry of the “baby sister”, as Nergish calls her, into active Gandhian politics. (We are told that Nergish’s ill health prevented her from joining active politics unlike in the case of the other three sisters.)

Snippets here, letters there, newspaper reports of the times, do give us an idea of Khorshedben’s participation in the movement. For instance, the *Bombay Chronicle* reproduces a report of the Satyagrah Viramgam Camp,

reporting on her activities. “Khurshedben, granddaughter of Dadabhai is here with her party, strenuously working for the boycott of liquor by closely picketing liquor shops day and night.” (7)

The same note includes other stirrings, not directly related to Khurshedben but which I thought was contextually relevant. To disregard them would mean repudiating the fact that it is not a single leader’s commitment but a people’s involvement that creates revolutions. Hence, I refer here to the same report that brings alive for us today, the heady exhilaration of the 30s along with its failures and pitfalls. We read about two satyagrahis “arrested for possessing contraband salt” but also about contraband salt shops being opened and salt being “immediately bought by men and women,” and how Viramgam was “observing hartal as protest against the assault and wrongful arrest of satyagrahis.” Another item, related to the period: “a volunteer who was peacefully making the best of his time by spinning on a ‘takht’, was asked to stop his peaceful work by the magistrate, whereupon all the white cap wearers left the court in protest.” (8)

A few months later, the same paper reports Khurshedben’s participation in the “impressive demonstration” to mourn the death of the fiery Sardar Bhagat Singh, held by women in Bombay at Bhuleshwar, in which “every community was represented.” The silent, peaceful procession terminated at CP Tank, where Khurshedben, seconding the leader’s resolution, said that it was not an occasion for making speeches, complimented the women for their part in the struggle, emphasised Gandhi’s unique ability in the great awakening of women, and emphasised the path of non-violence. (9)

The most daring and astounding of exploits, however, was this intrepid woman’s journey to the North West Frontier Province and her meeting with Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, the Frontier Gandhi, and to spread the message of non-violence among dacoits who overran the area. These Pathans would kidnap Hindu men, women and children, often killing them. While the British made an apparent show of protecting them against dacoity to win Hindu sympathy, they did not make any serious attempt to change the status quo, indicating that the infamous British policy of Divide and Rule, had made insidious inroads here as well. (10)

In her angry letters, written to the Home Secretary, subsequent to her arrest, Khurshedben emphasises her attempt “to create a living bond between the Hindus and their Pathan neighbours.” While arguing with the dacoits on the inhumanity of killing one’s fellow human beings,

she had asked the Hindus to show more courage. It would seem they had given “a patient hearing” to her talks on non-violence. She met the women folk, initiated sanitation drives, taught them to spin the charka and Gandhi’s message of peace. We are told how, as a result, the mother of one dacoit swore she would stop cooking for her son till he lay down his arms! (11)

Khurshedben sought official permission to cross the border to work in the tribal areas again and yet again but in vain. Finally, she crossed the border and was on her way to obtaining the release of those kidnapped, including a woman, when she was arrested or, as she put it, “kidnapped without trial. Gandhi himself was to protest, that the arrest was despite the fact that the authorities with whom “this brave and fearless woman” had come into contact “had recognised her worth, her transparent honesty and utter absence of secrecy about her movements in the Frontier Province.” (12)

Two interesting, if unrelated experiences during Khurshedben’s jail terms are worth mentioning if only to convey the personal, human factor that is also embedded in the larger histories of the times. Responding to a letter from Eva, Khurshed writes about her train journey at night from Bihar to Poona’s Yerwada Jail under an eight armed police escort. Apparently the sleepy policemen handed her their revolvers for safekeeping! When the astonished prisoner asked how they could dare do this, prompt came their trusting reply, “Oh we know you are non-violent.” (13)

Another snippet we get from her jail experiences is her recall: “The best roses I have ever grown were during the term I served in jail.” (14) The blend of the personal with the political in both these instances, and there must have been so many more, now lost in time, makes this patriot appear in such a humorous and humane light. At the same time, as the author of this article, Parinaz Gandhi, perceptively remarks, “her satisfaction seemed to come not only for transforming the sewage filled landscape, but for transforming in her humble way, the history of India, for the self- transformation that changed her life so completely.” (15)

Among her numerous involvements with the movement, the well-known activist, Dr. Aloo Dastur mentions Khurshedben actively propagating Civil Disobedience among the workers of the Tata Steel Plant in Jamshedpur, who, in sympathy with the national movement “kept the machines running but no steel would be produced.” (16)

Khurshedben’s name crops up once more, in the *Bombay Chronicle*, dated January 16, 1947, (just about a year before her mentor was to be assassinated), under



the headline, “Proposed Indian Medical Mission for Vietnam: Khurshedben offers her services as Interpreter.” With due modesty she says her only qualification was a fairly good knowledge of the French language and a share in India’s fight for freedom. And then ends with such eloquence; “All freedom fighters are with you /Long Live Vietnam.” Whether or not the intrepid woman was invited, we will never know since no record is available to satisfy our curiosity. (17)

Khurshedben’s name appears only in an aside when she was with Gandhi in Panchgani in 1944. But I thought I would include this information because it is so much a part of our personal histories but which simultaneously has a bearing on the larger histories of the nation. Gandhi was recuperating at Dilkhush Bungalow after his release from Yerwada; it was also soon after the deaths of Kasturba and Mahadev Desai. Apparently, Gandhi sent a basket of fruits to Silloo Virjee, an invalid staying with her family, at the iconic “Maidstone,” the second oldest bungalow in Panchgani. The astonished Virjees, in no way connected with the Gandhian movement, recall how subsequently “Khorshed Naoroji, granddaughter of Dadabhai Naoroji, carrying a letter from Gandhiji himself” arrived at the bungalow. Pesi Virjee, a great raconteur, till the near end of his days, reproduces the note which must have been carefully preserved as part of the family archives. The letter was written in Gujarati (which the online author has reproduced and also translated into English). In the letter, Gandhi, in his characteristic light hearted fashion, chides Shireen for replying to him in English, “Why do you write in English? You have made a spelling mistake.” (18)

When Gandhi visited the family, yet another piece of people’s history was created. Much against his doctor’s remonstrations, the ailing man agreed to Pesi’s request to plant a gulmohor sapling at the gate, which till recently, has stood the vagaries of weather and time. (19)

To add a postscript: Gandhi’s controversial emphasis on the removal of English, is understandable in the context of an anti-colonial struggle. It is relevant to add here that if not Khurshedben, her two sisters, Geshasp and Perin were actively involved in the Gandhian promotion of Hindustani, especially in establishing the Bombay Chapter of The Hindustani Prachar Sabha, which still stands although it has undergone a metamorphosis today. It was at Perin Captain’s persuasion that the Bombay Sabha had included the study of Urdu. In fact in a letter to Perin, Gandhi himself had emphasised the study of Urdu saying, “*Bina Urdu Hindi langdi bun jayegi.*” (Without Urdu, Hindi will become lame) (20) It stands to reason that the

portraits of the two Captain sisters hang on the walls of this historic institution.

No portrait of Khorshed hangs on the wall, as they do of her illustrious sisters. Yet, a portrait, however sketchy, does emerge, when we dig deep into the crevices of history. Undoubtedly, it is a blurred portrait, but perhaps, precisely because it is so imprecise, it becomes all the more intriguing. Inevitably, even from the little we know of her, we get contradictory opinions. To some extent this would be because of the perspective and interaction of that particular individual. But then contradictions exist in all of us and why would Khorshed have been an exception? The various names she was known by adds not to the confusion but to the multifaceted nature of her being. Thus she was Khorshed to family and to personal friends, Khurshedben to Gandhi and the various Gandhians whose paths she crossed. Often the suffix, ‘Dadabhai Naoroji’s granddaughter’ was added to her name. At other times she was referred to as Bulbul, because of her musical voice.

Likewise, we hear contradictory comments about her nature and temperament. Thus to Aloo Dastur, Khorshed was the most aggressive among all her sisters in her nationalism. (21) Usha Mehta, while at Yerwada, felt that due to her “sophisticated upbringing and language problems”, she could not identify easily with the other inmates, and with their sitting and eating habits. She usually remained aloof, engrossed in her own reading and writing, but what emanated always was “her deep love for the country and its people.” (22) *Time* magazine, referring to her as head of Gandhi’s foreign secretariat, describes her as a slim Bombay Parsi, “with an easy sense of humour and a pleasant, informal manner.” Gandhi himself, writes of her as a “brave and fearless woman”, who in common with her other sisters “has dedicated herself to the service of India.” However, we hear how, when need arose, the woman would argue bravely and fearlessly with her mentor, as when she took up for Kasturba or insisted women join the Dandi march.

Khorshed crossed many borders, actual and symbolic; from India to Europe, from Bombay to the North West Frontier Province, from mansion to ashram, from music to politics, from luxury to austerity. The last we hear of her, however, was her performance at the CJ Hall in Bombay under the patronage of Jawaharlal Nehru, where, as the *Times of India* reported, “her splendid championing of the cause of International Music in India has earned her the gratitude of all those who think of India as part of the world’s vast pattern of culture.” (23)

Sad to say a dedicated life such as hers, has no record of her death.

(My grateful thanks to Dr Dinyar Patel, (Dept. of History, University of South Carolina) for introducing me to the life and work of Khorshed Naoroji, through his talk at Mani Bhavan ("A Forgotten Gandhian: Khurshedben Naoroji", 13 October 2019) and my deep gratitude for so generously sharing his research material to help me write this article for SPARROW SNL 40)

## Foot Notes

01. Parinaz Gandhi, "In the Tradition of Dadabhai Naoroji," *Parsiana*, March 1993, p.69.
02. Ibid, p.70.
03. Nawaz B. Mody, "Perin Captain: From Dadabhai to Mahatma Gandhi" in Nawaz B. Mody, ed., *Women in India's Freedom Struggle*, Allied Publishers, Mumbai, 2008, pp.206-7.
04. Artemis Leontis, "An American in Paris, A Parsi in Athens," in Dimitris Damaskos and Dimitris Plantzos, Eds., *A Singular Antiquity: Archaeology and Hellenic Identity in Twentieth Century Greece*, Athens, 2008, pp. 359-70.
05. Ibid, pp. 362-63; p. 368.
06. Ibid., p.365.
07. "Virangam Satyagrahis Sentenced", *Bombay Chronicle*, 26 May 1930, p. 12.
08. Ibid.
09. "Procession in Honour of Bhagat Singh," *Bombay Chronicle*, 26 September 1931, p.7.
10. Details about North West Frontier and her meeting with Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan are based on the lecture given by Dr Dinyar Patel at Mani Bhavan .
11. "Mahatma on Miss Naoroji's Arrest," *Bombay Chronicle*, 8 June 1941, p.8; Op.cit. n.1, p.69. The reference to the mother of a dacoit saying she would stop cooking for her son is based on Dr Dinyar Patel's lecture given at Mani Bhavan.
12. Ibid, *Bombay Chronicle*, 8 June 1941, p.8. Gandhi calling Khurshedben "brave and fearless" is something that could be said of all the women in the public sphere in the freedom movement, during the colonial period. They took great personal risks being in the movement. As Khurshedben mentions in the same article, "during all my talks, private and public, at least one CID officer was always present."
13. Op.cit. n.4, p.369.
14. Op.cit. n.1, p.69.
15. Ibid, p.69.

16. Ibid.
17. "Proposed Indian Medical Mission for Vietnam," *Bombay Chronicle*, 16 January 1947, p.5.
18. "Gandhi and Panchgani" from the website "Initiatives of Change" (in.iofc.org)
19. Ibid. The Gulmohar tree standing the vagaries of time is the personal experience of this author who has visited Maidstone in the past.
20. Dr Susheela Gupta, *Hindustani Prachar Sabha ke Teen Karandar: Morarji Bhai Desai, Parin Behn Captain Aur Goshi Behn Captain* (Hindustani Prachar Sabha, Mumbai, 2003)
21. Op.cit. no.1, p.69.
22. Ibid.
23. "From my musical sketchbook," *The Times of India*, 31 December 1941, p.3.



## Congratulations!



SPARROW Congratulates **Priyanka Radhakrishnan** for receiving the 'Pravasi Samman Award' at the 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2021 held virtually in Delhi on January 9, 2021. Priyanka Radhakrishnan, the first Indian-origin person to become a Minister in New Zealand, is the daughter of Ernakulam native Raman Radhakrishnan and (late) Usha. Priyanka's mother Usha is the granddaughter of Palakkad native Dr C R Krishna Pillai, who was the founder-president of Madirasi Kerala Samajam.

SPARROW Congratulates Professor **Gita Sen**, former Chairperson of the Centre for Public Policy at the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore, for receiving the Dan David Prize for the year 2020 for her pioneering work to advance gender equality.



## UNTITLED POEMS

*B V Bharathi*

-1-

Fried oil they say must not be reused  
Bad for the heart  
A second chance we give to relationships  
Why not to poor oil?

-2-

Lessons on concurrence  
Women learn even from chapati  
With lesser dough also  
One can flatten it uncompromising in width

-3-

The old cooker whistles six times  
But the pulses do not get cooked, of late.  
The cooker gasket can be replaced  
But what about relationships?

-4-

Any refrigerated item,  
assuming will take it and  
indifferently slip into a boiling oil  
will burst giving boils.



Untitled poems of B V Bharathi, Page No. 9, 9, 13 and 11 respectively from the *Kitchen Kavitegalu* (Kitchen Poems), (Bahuroopi, Bengaluru, 2018). Translated by Pratibha Nandakumar for SPARROW Newsletter with permission from B V Bharathi



## SPARROW LITERARY AWARD 2019

**S**PARROW-R Thyagarajan Literary Award 2019 event on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2019, was as usual a quiet, intimate function celebrated among friends and well-wishers.

The theme was poetry and the awardees for Tamil language for 2019 were senior Tamil poet and writer Yuvan Chandrasekhar, who writes poetry in the name of M Yuvan and is a prolific writer and a much acclaimed and interviewed writer, poet and translator who has been a prominent writer in the Tamil literary scene for the past thirty years, and young poet and translator Geetha Sukumaran, a poet and also a translator who has brought out books which are both historically relevant and important contributions to Tamil and world literature. The non-Tamil language chosen this year was Punjabi and the awardee this year was the poet Simrat Gagan, a poet, novelist and educationist and a well-known voice among young aspiring Punjabi writers. The judges on the panel for Tamil were Ambai, a Tamil writer and currently the Director of SPARROW and D I Aravindan who was Executive Editor of Minnambalam.com and who is now Editor for the Tamil web section of Times Internet Limited of the Times Group. Poet Sukumaran Narayanan who was one of the judges on the panel in the previous years kindly agreed to be a consultant and helped in short listing the poets. The judge on the panel for Punjabi language was Dr Charanjeet Kaur, Retd I/C Principal and Associate Professor and Head, Department of English, Smt. Chandibai Himathmal Mansukhani College, Ulhasnagar, Dist. Thane, Contributing Editor, Indian Writing in English. Muse India and Associate Director, SPARROW.

Maithreyi Yagnik compeered the event and began by welcoming the writers and the audience. On this occasion all of us remembered our friend and associate, Kannada writer Tulasi Venugopal, who succumbed to cancer and passed away in April 2019. After introducing the awardees the award citations were read out and the awards given to them by former trustee, patron, friend and well-wisher Dr Divya Pandey.

### The award citation for Yuvan Chandrasekhar was:

*The literary journey of Yuvan Chandrasekar, who is known as a short story writer and a novelist, began as a poet writing in the name of M Yuvan. It could be said that his other works, in a way, have been extensions of his poetry. The poetry of M Yuvan, who has been writing for the past three decades, has a grammar of its own. Its language is modern. Seemingly*

*simple but with complex inner spaces, his poetry goes beyond his times in its content. It tries to portray the modern mind's weariness and its peace in one unbroken thread. His poetry inspires us to know, feel and see the unknown in the known, the inexperienced in the experienced and the unseen in what is seen. In appreciation of his poetry whose words get loaded with each reading with entwined thoughts and emotions and in recognition of his immense contribution to contemporary Tamil literature, SPARROW (Sound & Picture Archives for Research on Women) has great pleasure in giving Yuvan Chandrasekar the SPARROW Literary Award 2019.*

### The award citation for Geetha Sukumaran, whose award her father accepted was:

*Geetha Sukumaran works quietly without much affectation at her poetry, containing entirely different images and with words embedded with silences that burst out striking you unawares. In Geetha's poems women from the Sangam land to diasporic land walk hand in hand as if there is no time to be traversed in between. Her poems effortlessly enter through doors hitherto not entered. In appreciation of her poetry that changes the way women's poetic language must be seen, taking it to many different directions spreading everywhere and in recognition of her poetic efforts SPARROW (Sound & Picture Archives for Research on Women) has great pleasure in giving Geetha Sukumaran the SPARROW Literary Award 2019.*

### The award citation for Simrat Gagan was:

*Simrat Gagan is a fresh young voice in contemporary Punjabi poetry who claims that it is not she who writes the poetry, rather it is the poetry that writes her. With her first collection of poems titled Panj Ishq (Five Love Affairs) published in 1997, she distinguished herself as a poet with fresh imagery and style. Her later book Tasbi (A Rosary, 2006) entrenched her position in the Punjabi literary world. Simran's poems are celebrations of grief, pain and sorrows and her poetic thoughts mostly spring from the space beyond mind, according to her. In appreciation of her poetry that has chartered new roads in Punjabi literature and in recognition of her*

*contribution to contemporary Punjabi literature SPARROW (Sound & Picture Archives for Research on Women) has great pleasure in giving Simrat Gagan the SPARROW Literary Award 2019.*

In his acceptance speech in Tamil, Yuvan Chandrasekhar spoke extensively about what it means to write both poetry and fiction and the ways in which he arrives at poetry. He said that sometimes an entire poem could come to him in a dream and that at times, stray lines of a poem could come to his mind and then he had to wait for other lines to appear to complete the poem. The wait for a poem to be completed could take even several years, he said.

Geetha Sukumaran's acceptance speech which was sent to us, beautifully brought out her diasporic existence and how poetry is her way of coming to terms with living in a country "bearing the form of a woman and the inheritance that comes with it from another land." She explains that she realised that poetry to her was "this negotiation with her inner conflicts" and the "dichotomy between turmoil and tranquility, discord and serenity" and that it was this "tussle between the two ends" that she identified as poetry.

In her acceptance speech in Punjabi, Simrat Gagan said: "I don't write poetry: poetry writes me." She elaborated on how and why she writes poetry: "My poetry has been shaped by my life experiences, but the importance of poetry could never diminish in my life. Like mud—which you may knead, bake, disperse in the wind, beat, sink—its fertility never ends, no matter what you do with it." Speaking about what inspired her to write poetry she said that being a Sikh, she believed that the 10 Sikh Gurus—all writers of a high order—had inspired Punjabi women writers to read and write. Quoting Sahir Ludhianvi's lines, *Duniya ke tajurbat aur havadist ki shakal mein / jo kuch mujhe mila, lauta raha hoon main*. (In the form of experiences and mishaps, whatever the world / Has given me, I am giving it back) she said that sensitive souls like her record what they experience or what they see happening around them.

The award event ended with Krithika Sreenivasan's lecture-demonstration on the subject "Contribution of Women to Indian Classical Music." From the Bhakti movement to present times Krithika detailed women's contribution to Indian classical music in terms of singing and composing. It was an inspiring session with interludes of Krithika singing the songs of some of the women composers.



### SPARROW LITERARY AWARD 2019



L to R: Dr Shoba Venkatesh Ghosh, Dr Charanjeet Kaur, Dr Divya Pandey, Yuvan Chandrasekhar, Senthamarai Kannan P (Geetha Sukumaran's Father), Simrat Gagan & Dr C S Lakshmi.



Krithika Sreenivasan's lecture-demonstration on the subject "Contribution of Women to Indian Classical Music."



SPARROW Team with Awardees and Friends

## Pi Hmuaki

Malsawmi Jacob

They couldn't stand your prophetic voice  
that spoke against their misdeeds  
as night after night you sang your songs  
in your lonely hut  
Your gong music enchanted them  
melody drove them wild  
but the lyrics did the mischief –  
the lyrics pierced their hearts.

The heroes loved their exploits  
heads and loots won in raids  
killing was the way to live  
to attain the honoured place in *pialral*<sup>1</sup>

You derided their philosophy  
wouldn't sing their eulogy  
after a successful raid,  
tried to stop them dating *lasi*<sup>2</sup>  
told them to choose *tlangsam*<sup>3</sup> over *kangthai*<sup>4</sup>

Their annoyance grew day by day,  
decided to silence you altogether  
Shut you out from golden sunlight  
wind and call of *chuk-chu-ri-kur*<sup>5</sup>.

Your gong still rings under the earth  
Bong! Bong!  
A disturbance in tyrants' ears.

(Pi Hmuaki was the first Mizo song composer known by name. She was buried alive, supposedly for composing so many songs that the villagers were afraid the coming generations would have nothing more to compose. The version given here is the present poet's interpretation)

**Footnotes:**

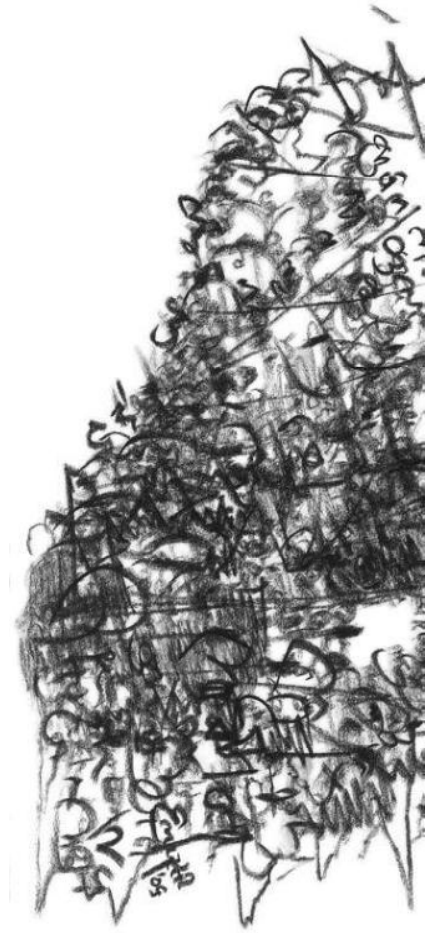
<sup>1</sup> The place where the spirits of dead people were believed to go. 'Heroes' who had slain many enemies and animals were supposed to receive a special treatment there.

<sup>2</sup> Wood nymphs who helped men they fell in love with to shoot many animals.

<sup>3</sup> A plant used for healing wounds.

<sup>4</sup> Nettle

<sup>5</sup> Spotted dove





## SPARROW CONGRATULATES DR ROHINI GODBOLE



**S**PARROW is absolutely thrilled that particle physicist and Padma Shri awardee Dr Rohini Godbole has been conferred with the Ordre National du Merite, one of the highest distinctions granted by France

to honour eminent persons. SPARROW congratulates her with great delight.

Dr Rohini Godbole is part of our book on women scientists—*The Balancing Act: Stories of Women in Science*. She told us when she spoke about her work: ... “That the work you do has something to say about how the whole universe is; why the universe works the way it works.... I would never trade this for anything else.”

An excerpt from the note *The Girl From Huzurpaga* on Dr Rohini Godbole along with some additional comments.

...[For her PhD] Rohini decided to go to State University of New York at Stony Brook. The admission was for MS, to be followed by PhD. And here there were five girls among forty-five boys. Her PhD was in the area of theoretical high energy physics.

After five years of doing PhD Rohini had many post-doc offers in Europe and the USA.

But she wanted to come home. Looking back she feels that it would have been a good idea to have established herself there before coming back. Maybe her life would have taken a totally different course had she stayed back.

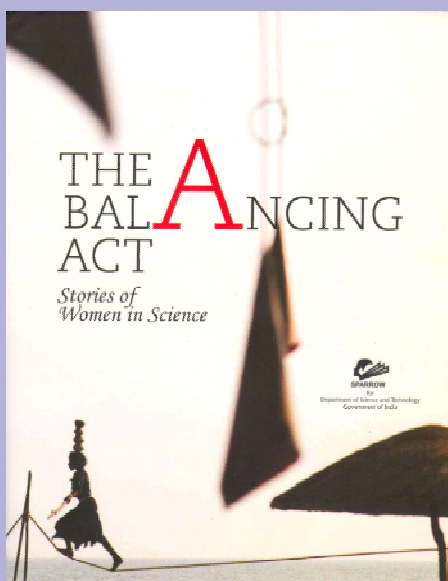
Rohini came back and joined the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), Mumbai. She was here for the next three years as a post-doc researcher.

Once one of her senior colleagues told her that maybe she should just look for a lecturer's job in a women's college in a mofussil town. Rohini was young and full of doubts herself. She wondered if she was good enough to teach in city colleges or IIT or to do research.

Rohini worked very hard for more than anything else she wanted to prove to herself that she could do science at a competitive level. She had very good collaborators at TIFR and she was enjoying her work there. What boosted her confidence at this time were the conferences she attended. She particularly remembers a conference she attended abroad. It was a five-day conference. On her way back at the Frankfurt airport, she met a Japanese colleague who had been at the conference with her. When it was time to catch their different flights, he referred to a research paper she had written and asked her if she was the same Godbole.

When Rohini told him that she was indeed the same Godbole, he stood up straight, then bent low and said, ‘I respect that work.’

Young as she was Rohini was thrilled with such compliments. However, steeped as she was in efforts to do research and make a name for herself as a physicist whose work is respected, Rohini did not pay much attention to jibes or comments about her being a woman in physics or being always



**THE BALANCING ACT**  
*STORIES OF*  
**WOMEN IN SCIENCE**

SPARROW Publication  
for Department of  
Science and Technology  
Government of India

referred to in parenthesis or being advised to forget about research now that she was in the university set up and not in an institute. If she was the only woman physicist to give a plenary lecture after which a male colleague would come up to her and say that he had not expected her to give such a good talk, she merely told him, 'Thanks for nothing' and moved on. If in an important physics conference to envision what physics should be in the twentieth century, she, as the only woman, would be asked to talk not about her vision in physics but about women in physics, she would just point out the irony of it all to her male colleagues who would merely tell her in surprise men could not be expected to talk on that.

Rohini brushed these incidents aside concentrating as she was on research.

The International Union of Pure and Applied Physics held its first conference at Paris on 'Women in Physics' in March 2002. Rohini was invited as the 'Asian success story invitee'. Rohini had to talk about her experience of being a woman physicist in India.

It was in this conference that she became aware that there were a number of issues that she had not noticed and had overlooked. She realised that some issues may appear peripheral and unimportant—like having a ladies' toilet or a crèche in big science institutions. But even these were important for women to do advanced science.

After that Rohini became an active participant in actions taken for women in science. Among her various attempts is the book *Lilavati's Daughters: The Women Scientists of India* in which many women scientists have spoken about their experiences while practising science in India....

Rohini feels that for a woman to have a career in science, she needs a family and a society which make it possible. Fortunately for her she had a set of parents who told her, 'The world is yours. Go; do what you can do.'

Rohini wants young people to venture into the world to do what they want. Echoing her parents she always tells them: 'Nothing else matters except your passion for science.'

Rohini is a fellow of all the three academies of science. She is a member of several national and international commissions and advisory bodies including the Commission on Particles and Fields of the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics. Her research, which includes a very large list of

publications in reputed international journals, has been recognized with many awards and distinctions. A few from a long list are: the INSA Satyendranath Bose Medal (2009), the Asiatic Society of Kolkatta's Meghnad Saha Memorial gold medal (2008) and the IISc Rustom Choksi award for research in 2006.

Then came the Padma Shri in 2019. 2021 brings her the Ordre National du Merite.

What a journey it has been for Dr Rohini Godbole!  
With great pleasure and regards we salute you!



### A Padma Award for SANGKHUMI BUALCHHUAK of MIZORAM



Sangkhumi Bualchhuak of Mizoram has been awarded the Padma Shri 2021 for social work and we are happy we have an interview with her in the SPARROW archives.

When Malsawmi Jacob of SPARROW had interviewed B. Sangkhumi in 2009, at that time she was still struggling to deal with various laws that did injustice to women. Growing up in Champhai as the eldest of eleven children, B Sanghukumi or Pi. Sanghukumi as she is mentioned in the Mizo language, realised that there was no awareness among women about the archaic laws, and regressive customs because of low levels of literacy. She decided to change this situation whatever the obstacles. After a struggle of forty years it was only in 2014 that the State Law Commission finally took it upon itself to review The Mizo Marriage Bill, 2013, The Mizo Inheritance Bill, 2013, and The Mizo Divorce Bill, 2013. This was seen as the result of a unique struggle that has gone on for many years, waged by the Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP), an apex body representing several local women's groups, the largest women federation and a pressure group in Mizoram. Pi. Sanghkumi was a public servant when she decided to lead MHIP. She had also been known for working in the Mizoram Public Service Commission (MPSC) for 9 years, first as Member and later on as Chairman. Prior to her stint in MPSC, she was Director, Higher & Technical Education, and Government of Mizoram. A Padma Award for her is a recognition of all her work.

## SPARROW LITERARY AWARD 2020

**S**PARROW Literary Award, instituted by R Thyagarajan, Founder, Shriram Group, was announced in December. The award function is usually held every year in December but due to the pandemic we had to cancel the SPARROW Literary Award function but SPARROW hopes that sometime in the future we will be able to meet the awardees in person.

This year for consideration for the SPARROW-R THYAGARAJAN Literary Award 2020 was the genre of translation. In the category of translation, translation from Tamil to another language and another language to Tamil and direct translations into Tamil from non-Indian languages were taken into consideration. The languages chosen were Sanskrit, and Kannada in Indian languages and French in non-Indian language. The SPARROW Literary Awards are normally given for a woman and a man in Indian languages and either a woman or a man for the non-Indian language category. The SPARROW panel of judges this year were D I Aravindan and Ambai for the Indian languages. For the French language award we consulted many including Nagarathinam Krishna who kindly suggested many names. The final award decisions were taken by D I Aravindan and Ambai in the panel of judges. This year SPARROW decided to award three persons instead of two in the Indian languages category and one person from the non-Indian languages category.

The awardees this year are K Nallathambi for translation from Tamil to Kannada and Kannada to Tamil, Krishangini for translation from Hindi to Tamil, Madhumitha for translation from Sanskrit to Tamil and S A Vengada Soupraya Nayagar for translation from French to Tamil and Tamil to French. The awardees have honoured SPARROW and the panel of judges by accepting the awards.

### The award citation for K NALLATHAMBI:

*K Nallathambi is a poet and a writer who has also taken upon himself the mission of translating the best from Tamil and Kannada. In the last six years he has translated a wide range of fiction, non-fiction and dramas from Kannada to Tamil and from Tamil to Kannada. He has not only brought P Lankesh, S Diwakar, Vasudhendra, Jayanth Kaikini, Nemichandra and G N Nagaraj to Tamil but also taken to Kannada from Tamil Sundara Ramasamy, Perumal Murugan and Sangam literature. His translation is simple and evocative. In recognition and appreciation of his significant contribution to Tamil literature through his translation efforts SPARROW has great pleasure*

*in giving K Nallathambi the SPARROW Literary Award 2020.*

### The award citation for KRISHANGINI:

*Krishangini is an acclaimed poet, writer, publisher and translator in the Tamil literary world. She is also an active documentalist of not only women's life and expression but also that of others. She has been working quietly on translations of plays, poems, short stories, novels and non-fictional writing from Hindi and English to Tamil for many years now. Her tireless translation efforts have brought to Tamil from original Hindi and Hindi translations the works of Bertolt Brecht, Ambedkar, Mridula Garg, Indira Goswami, Ismat Chughtai, Omprakash Valmiki, Leeladhar Mandloi, Mohandas Naimishrai and Amarkant. Her monumental work has been to translate into Tamil B R Ambedkar's Grammar and Dictionary of the Pali Language. In recognition and appreciation of her committed translation efforts, SPARROW has great pleasure in giving Krishangini the SPARROW Literary Award 2020.*

### The award citation for MADHUMITHA:

*Madhumitha is a poet, lyricist and a translator who can translate from Sanskrit, Telugu and Kannada. Although her mother tongue is Telugu she feels at home in other languages she has mastered. Along with her own creative work she has taken up translation as a labour of love. She has brought to Tamil Barthruhari's "Niti Sataka" on polity and ethics and his "Subhashitha Trishati" encompassing the entire human life and Kalidasa's "Meghaduta" and "Ritusamhara". Along with translations from Telugu and Kannada her taking up the immense task of translating from Sanskrit needs to be celebrated and recognised. In recognition and appreciation of her efforts to translate from Sanskrit SPARROW has great pleasure in giving Madhumitha the SPARROW Literary Award 2020.*

### The award citation for DR S A VENGADA SOUPRAYA NAYAGAR:

*Dr S A Vengada Soupraya Nayagar teaches French in an institute for post-graduate studies and research*



*in Pondicherry. He is a rare trilingual translator who is at ease translating in English, French and Tamil. He has translated Sangam literature into French and introduced Tamil readers to French writers Hiner Saleem, Le Clézio, Michaël Ferrier, Hubert Haddad and Tahr Ben Jelloun and many French short stories. His translations into Tamil from French perform the miracle of bringing a totally different language and its culture into Tamil in a simple, smooth, clear and uncluttered language. In recognition and appreciation of his immense contribution in bringing to Tamil the best from French literature SPARROW has great pleasure in giving Dr S A Vengada Soupraya Nayagar the SPARROW Literary Award 2020.*

**In his acceptance note K. Nallathambi** writes about his days as a simple Sales Representative of a private company based in Bangalore and retiring as the All India Marketing Manager after serving the company for nearly 35 years. He belonged to a business family which did not give priority to education. Many of his dreams like becoming a professor of English and becoming a film director had to be forsaken and he says he ended up selling mattresses. After his retirement there was a big vacuum. He was wandering for a year or two not knowing what to do. Just to pass his time, he started translating P Lankesh's Kannada poems into Tamil but had no intention of publishing them. The credit goes to his wife Mallika, at whose behest and great persuasion, he decided to publish the manuscript, though after a lot of difficulties and from there his journey back to the literary world began. And that opened the flood-gates and within six years translation became his passion.

**In her acceptance note Krishangini** dedicated this award to her mother Poorani (Sampoornam) who was a poet and a writer. In her note Krishangini recalls her childhood days and how the freedom movement was supported in her family. Her father was a businessman who ran a restaurant and he wore only khadi. Everyone at home used to spin thread on the charkha. In her father's hotel the employees were given bonus and new clothes on Independence Day. Her mother could not wear khadi since khadi did not come in nine-yard length and she wore the traditional nine-yard sari. For her mother Poorani who was a homemaker who could not go out of the house to take part in the freedom struggle, Hindi became the chosen weapon of the freedom struggle and she wielded it as a weapon. She taught girls Hindi from 1935 to 1960. The girls used to come in groups to learn from her. Talking about her motivation to translate Krishangini narrates an incident from her childhood, when she was about seven. She heard her mother vehemently objecting to a male

writer translating and publishing a Premchand story in his name. She threw him out of the house saying it was literary theft. It was the first time the child Krishangini had heard that word. Later in life when Krishangini completed her Master's in Hindi, her mother Poorani advised her to not take up teaching Hindi but to do something creative with the language. Kisangani took up translation seriously only in the last ten years and only after her mother's demise. She says in the note that whatever she takes up for translation initially she tries to assess its quality and its need to be translated. Whatever she is not able to write on her own, whatever has not been given to her in her life, she takes that up for translation. Krishangini says, when she translates, her mother Poorani sits on her shoulder like a sunbird. And she can hear her mother saying: "Hey, are you translating or doing literary theft?"

**In her acceptance note Madhumitha** appreciates the award being given for translation from Sanskrit when Sanskrit is being seen with much bitterness. She says in the note that she is happy that the award is being given to a woman hailing from the southern regions of Tamil Nadu, who was born into an agricultural family and could not come out of her house before marriage, who went to school in a covered rickshaw, got married into an agricultural family, who continues to do social service and whose paternal grandfather was a freedom fighter. She says that such awards will not only encourage a writer to create more literary works but such awards will also encourage the family of a writer to allow her to write with more freedom.

**In his acceptance note Dr S A Vengada Soupraya Nayagar** says that he began to translate to share the joy he got from reading with others. Although he began this sharing as a language exercise, the variety of interesting challenges presented by different fields like language, culture and history made him work with deeper involvement. When one confronts these challenges and completes the task of translation, the immense satisfaction one receives is incomparable, according to him. Moreover, the work of translation has enhanced his reading and widened his circle of friends. Vengada Nayagar asserts that apart from translating words of a language, the purpose of translation should be to present the entire cultural aspects of that language in a natural style. And hence French translation scholar Michel Ballard emphasises that the original text has to be read several times. Accordingly, Vengada Nayagar has made it a point to grasp and digest the original text and then present it to the readers in a simple, readable style. He feels that such awards belie the notion that translations don't get due recognition and such awards are the cheering applause given to marathon runners. He strongly feels that this award given to him will

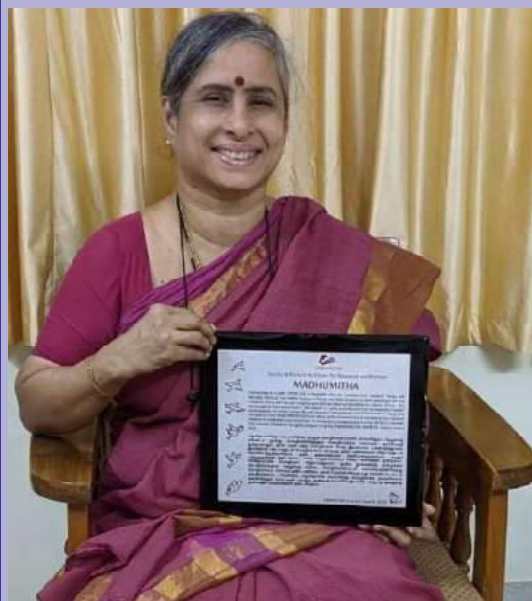
surely encourage those with him to proceed towards their goals with more speed.



**Dr S A Vengada Soupraya Nayagar**



**Krishangini**



**Madhumitha**



**K Nallathambi**

## SPARROW LITERARY AWARD 2020

SPARROW CONGRATULATES ALL THE WOMEN WHO WON THE PADMA AWARDS THIS YEAR! WE DON'T HAVE ALL THE DETAILS FOR ALL OF THEM BUT WILL FOLLOW UP ON THIS. MANY OF THEM WE WOULD HAVE NEVER COME TO KNOW BUT FOR THE PADMA AWARDS.

## SPORTS

**Mouma Das**, who won the Arjuna Award in 2013, became only the second table tennis player after Achantha Sharath Kamal to win the Padma Shri. Sharath won the recognition in 2019.

**Sudha Hari Narayan Singh**, long-distance runner who was awarded the Arjuna in 2012, is the second-most renowned athlete to bag the recognition. She is an Indian Olympic athlete in the 3000 metres steeplechase event. A national record holder in the event, she has represented India at international events since 2005. She is an Asian champion in the discipline and has won two gold and four silver medals at various editions of Asian Games and the continental championships. She had represented India at two consecutive Olympic Games, in 2012 and 2016.

**Anshu Jamsenpa** is an Indian mountaineer and the first woman in the world to scale the Mount Everest twice in a season, and the fastest double summitter to do so within five days.

Chennai-based **P Anitha** (35) was the captain of Indian women's national basketball team and has a record 30 medals in various national championships to her name. She was also the youngest ever to captain the national senior women's basketball team and was its captain for eight years. She has participated in several big sporting events like the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games.

## Art

Matha B Manjamma Jogati is currently the president of Karnataka Janapada Academy, Manjamma Jogati is a specialist in the field of folk arts. She is a transgender woman who went through immense struggles to become a theatre artiste. She joined the Jogathis who are dedicated to Goddess Yellamma. As a Jogathi she met folk artiste Kaalavva and then got introduced to performing arts and became a performing artiste. In 2010 she received the Karnataka Rajyotsava Award.

Renowned playback singer **KS Chithra** won the Padma Bhushan award, the third highest civilian award in India, for her contribution to the field of art. The singer, who has sung

in all four south Indian languages as well as Hindi, was earlier honoured with the Padma Shri award in 2005.

**Bombay Jayashri Ramnath** was born in Kolkata and brought up in Mumbai, 'Bombay' Jayashri Ramnath (58) is a well-known exponent of Carnatic and Hindustani music. She has sung for films also and has also composed for films. She was awarded the Kalaimamani award by the government of Tamil Nadu in 2007 and has also won the Tamil Nadu State film award for best playback singer (female) once.

**Bhuri Bai** of Pitol was the first Bhil artist to use paper and canvas for her painting. When J Swaminathan, the then Director of Bharat Bhawan asked her to paint on a paper, Bhuri Bai, for the first time used readymade colours and a brush. Bhuri Bai now works as an artist in the *Adivasi Lok Kala Academy* in Bhopal. She is a recipient of the highest award *Shikhar Sanman* (1986-1987) from the Government of Madhya Pradesh. In 1998, the Madhya Pradesh Government honoured her with the *Ahalya Sanman*. Bhuri Bai paints various aspects of Bhil life and culture. Animals, forests, Bhil deities, jewels and dress, huts and granaries, tattoos, dances are her subjects. When she draws aeroplanes or cars and buses or TVs they somehow become a part of the Bhil images she paints.

**Hanjabam Radhe Devi** from Manipur is a Potloi Setpi, a traditional bridal wear designer. The Potloi comprises a stiff cylindrical skirt, a blouse, a woven belt around the waist, and a delicate muslin shawl. 88-year-old Radhe Devi has given a new life to the dying art of making the bridal dress Potloi. She has made the Potloi bridal wear for more than 1000 brides so far.

**Nidumolu Sumathi** is known for being the first woman in the country to storm the male-dominated field of professional mridangam players. She is the daughter of Nidumolu Raghavayya, who was an expert at playing the mridangam. Her father had a great fascination for Dandamudi Ramamohan Rao's style of playing the percussion and admitted Sumathi under his tutelage. Sumathi later married him and performed with him. She has set up the institute Laya Vadika, in memory of her husband Dandamudi Ramamohana Rao.



**Lajwanti Devi** is a resident of Tripuri in Patiala district. She has kept alive the Punjab traditional embroidery, Phulkari alive.

**Dulari Devi** is from Ranti village in Madhubani district of Bihar has been announced with the Padma Shri award. She has said in an interview that she was with a broom till she found Madhubani painting. Born in a very poor family of the Mallah caste, Dulari Devi was married at the age of 12. She was a domestic servant who swept and mopped and did other jobs and art came into her life when she met the famous Madhubani painting artist Kapuri Devi in the course of her work. First she began to carve in wood in her courtyard but later took up Mithila painting. Dulari has been awarded the State Award in 2012-13. Her life story has been written by Geeta wolf in her book *Following My Paint Brush*.

Until this award no one knew about the existence of 85-year-old **Purnamasi Jani**, a Kui poet from Odisha. A tribal poet, Jani is popularly known as Tadi Sarubai in the region for her devotional songs and poems which she sings in Kui dialect. In the last 40 years, Jani has written and sung thousands of devotional and folk songs. She was born in 1936 and resides in Charipada village under Khajuriapada in Kandhamal district. She has never been to school nor does know how to read and write. She only recites devotional poems in Kui dialect. The locals find a great solace in her and she is also seen as a healer. Some efforts were made in the past decades to compile her poems. While Premanand Mohapatra published a compilation of her poems, Biswaranjan, a teacher in Phulbani College, has also brought her out of oblivion by writing about Tadi Sarubai's life and her verses. Her verses were also published by Abhay Singh in a literary journal *Sachitra Vijaya*.

## Social work

Social worker **Sindhutai Sapkal** is popularly referred to as "Mai". She runs an orphanage - Sanmati Bal Niketan Sanstha - in Pune near Hadapsar. Sapkal has adopted more than 1,000 orphan children over her long career and has received several awards for her social service. In 2010, a Marathi biopic of Sapkal titled *Mi Sindhutai Sapkal Boltey* was released in Maharashtra.

**Lakhimi Baruah** started the Konoklota Mahila Urban Cooperative Bank in 1998 in Jorhat, Assam, to make women from underprivileged backgrounds financially independent and secure.

Social worker **Parkash Kaur** from Jalandhar city has been awarded in recognition of her social service towards abandoned girl children in Punjab.

**Sangkhumi Bualchhuak** of Mizoram has been awarded the Padma Shri for social work.

72-year-old **Birubala Rabha** is a human rights activist who fights against witchcraft and witch hunting in Assam. Having been a victim of the practice, Rabha took it upon herself to raise her voice against it and has since saved dozens of lives. She runs an organisation called Mission Birubala which spreads awareness against witch hunting. She was instrumental in the Assam Government passing the Prevention of and Protection from Witch Hunting Act, 2015.

**Shanti Devi**, who was born on April 18, 1934, leads a voluntary body called Seva Samaj with an aim to rehabilitate the orphans and destitute children and provide them education and vocational training. She has set up an Ashram at Gunpur for this purpose. Prior to this, she had started a small Ashram in Koraput and later established the Seva Samaj in Rayagada for the development of the girl children of the area.

63-year-old **Chutni Devi** is a resident of Birbasha village in Saraikela-Kharsawan district of Jharkhand. She was once branded a witch and a heretic and later took up the fight against the evil custom. She fought for herself and also for 55 other women who had been branded as practitioners of black magic. Currently she has been associated with Flash organisation and working through family counselling centres to create awareness about the evil custom of branding women as witches and the belief in witchcraft.

**Kamali Soren**, known as the Guru Maa in Santal society, has been recognised for her social work and awarded the Padma Shri.

## Public Affairs

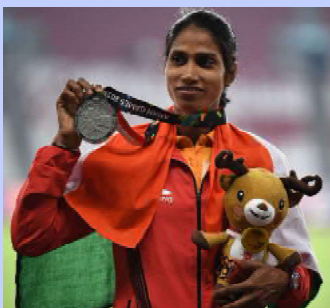
**Sumitra Mahajan**, former Lok Sabha speaker, has been awarded the Padma Bhushan. She feels that her sincere work has brought her the award.

**Bijoya Chakravarty** former MP and **Assam's** veteran politician Bijoya Chakravarty has been honoured with a Padma Shri.

## PADMA AWARDEES 2020



*Sindhutai Sapkal*



*Sudha Hari Narayan Singh*



*Anshu Jamsenpa*



*Purnamasi Jani*



*Pappammal*



*Bijoya Chakravarty*



*Bombay Jayashri*



*Birubala Rabha*



*Mouma Das*



*K S Chitra*



*Hanjabam Radhe Devi*



*Sanjida Khatun*



*Mridula Sinha*



*Matha B Manjamma jogati*



*Usha Yadav*



*Kamali Soren*





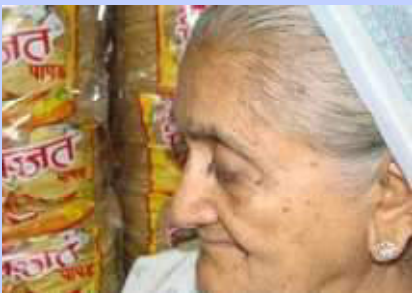
Sumitra Mahajan



Bhuri Bai



Lajwanti Devi



Jaswantiben Jamnadas Popat



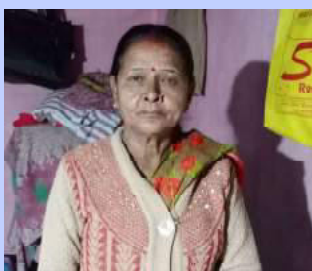
Nidumolu Sumathi



Dulari Devi



Prakash Kaur



Chutni Devi



Lakhimi Baruah



Shanti Devi



P Anitha

## Literature and Education

**Usha Yadav** from Agra has written many books for children and children and women form her major themes for writing.

**Mridula Sinha**, Former Goa Governor and Writer has been awarded a Padma Bhushan

## Agriculture

105-year-old **Pappammal** has become a legend in her own lifetime. Age does not stop her from working in her field in Thekkampatti, a village on the banks of river Bhavani. She cultivates millets, pulses and vegetables in her two and a half acre land, her valued possession. She had also been politically and socially active in the early part of life. She regularly attends discussions on agriculture organised by the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University and she was councillor of Thekkampatti panchayat in 1959.

## Trade and Industry

80-year-old **Jaswantiben Jamnadas Popat** was one of the seven Gujarati housewives who got together and started the Lijjat Papad business in 1959. They were not educated enough to take up jobs but wanted to contribute to the household to help their husbands. On 15 March 1959, they gathered on the terrace of an old building in a crowded South Mumbai locality and rolled out four packets of papads to sell. They invested 80 rupees which they had borrowed from Chaganlal Karamsi Parekh, a social worker with entrepreneurial brains, into their business. And the rest is history.

Musicologist **Sanjida Khatun** from Bangladesh, who has been awarded the Padma Shri, is one of the founders of Bangladesh Mukti Sangrami Shilpi Sangstha during the Liberation War in 1971. She also founded Chhayana, an institution devoted to Bengali culture, in the early 1960s. Even during the strict martial law imposed by General Ayub Khan she managed to organise the centenary celebrations of Rabindranath Tagore in 1961. She also brought together the Bengali artistes in the cause of the liberation war. She was conferred the Bangla Academy Literary Award in 1998 and Ekushey Padak in 1991.



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SPARROW ENTERED ITS SILVER JUBILEE YEAR IN DECEMBER 2013. IN ORDER TO CELEBRATE THIS WE HAD TAKEN A FEW INITIATIVES, ONE OF WHICH WAS TO ORGANISE CONVERSATIONS WITH WOMEN FROM VARIOUS WALKS OF LIFE.

The conversations can be viewed on the following links

**Conversation with Kalyanee Mulay**

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTxTDSSOEwjKbERIPDZZpjc6UzqVPzvZV>

**Conversation with Vimmi Sadarangani & Puthiyamaadhavai**

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTxTDSSOEwjKbERIPDZZpjc6UzqVPzvZV>

**Conversation with Jhelum Paranjape**

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTxTDSSOEwjKbERIPDZZpjc6UzqVPzvZV>

**Conversation with Purvadhanashree & Ranjana Dave**

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLGQe1I6sLySGI55ZhsBEdaH0dnf8q0zc>

**Conversation with Sumathi Murthy**

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLGQe1I6sLySGI55ZhsBEdaH0dnf8q0zc>

**Conversation Sudha Arora**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L4dB7gdoMgc>

**YOU CAN ALSO VISIT SPARROW WEBSITE FOR MORE DETAILS ABOUT THE CONVERSATIONS**

<http://www.sparrowonline.org/silver-jubilee.html>

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